

'Hams' Play Important Role in Emergency Communications

"Emergency . . . Emergency," the speaker crackled. "Go ahead," came the reply.

The speaker was dead for a moment. Then, with static as an overture, it barked its message. "Send an ambulance through. We have two injuries. Power still off here . . . Make it quick!"

The reassuring voice of the radio operator talked on and the "ham" on the other end thanked him. The ambulance came. The injured were rushed to hospitals.

The scene was the recent series of tornadoes that raked the eastern coast. And the ham radio operator was one of more than 100,000 trained communicators, and operators of amateur sets in our nation today.

The ability of American and Canadian amateur radio operators to handle emergency communications in time of disaster will be tested this weekend when the American Radio Relay league holds its annual simulated emergency test.

The organization's local emergency coordinators in hundreds of cities and towns are preparing mock disaster problems such as a simulated air raid, flood, fire or storm. The members of local groups do not know what the exact nature of the test will be, nor at what time it will "happen" until they are alerted by the coordinator.

At the alert signal, individual hams will man mobile, portable and home radio stations, set up liaison with local Civil Defense and Red Cross authorities and form emergency networks, just as they have done in real disasters like the New England hurricanes, the Iowa flood and the California earthquake earlier this year.

Messages originated by local Red Cross officials will be forwarded by radio to Red Cross amateur stations in Washington, Chicago and San Francisco. Messages written by the civil defense director at the community level will be forwarded to the director of civil defense for the state and information from the emergency coordinators will be flashed to American Radio Relay League headquarters in West Hartford, Conn. Taking part in the relaying of these messages will be members of the National Traffic system, comprising some of the best operators in the country.

The simulated emergency test is designed to help in training and organizing emergency radio networks in communities throughout the land," says Francis E. Handy, the AARL's communications manager. "We are ready, willing and able to carry on in case of any disaster which endangers human life and disables normal telephone, telegraph and electrical service."

Amateur radio "hams" have won the gratitude of the nation for their heroic performances in times of natural disaster. Through their organization, amateurs have cooperative working agreements with such agencies as the United Nations and the Red Cross. Amateur radio is, indeed, a magnificently useful institution.

From a humble beginning at the turn of the century, amateur radio has grown rapidly. Scattered over the globe are more than 150,000 "ham" operators who perform a service defined in international law as one of "self-training, intercommunication and technical investigations carried on by duly authorized persons interested in radio technique solely with a personal aim and without pecuniary interest."

In World War II, thousands of amateurs in the Naval Reserve were called to active duty, where they served with distinction. Many thousands of others served in other branches of the military.



ANTENNA CHECK — Donald Street, 720 Prospect ave., Pewaukee, checks antenna's field power.



TEST PORTABLE — Joseph Kuranz, 418 E. Wabash ave., Waukesha tests his portable transmitter. Kuranz, W9CWX, to his friends, can operate the unit off a car battery when electricity fails.



REPAIRS SET — Dan Shearer, W9TFX, Muskego, checks voltage on his 1000 watt transmitter.



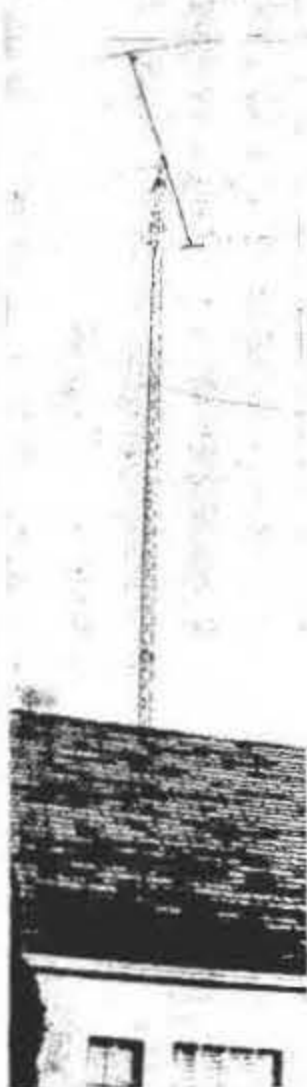
DISTANCE TRANSMITTER — Frank Majorana, Westchester, operates his high-powered transmitter capable of reaching distant places. Majorana's longest transmission was to a commander in Japan, 17,000 miles away. His radio beam was sent over the south pole, accounting for the added distance.



BROOKFIELD OPERATOR — Mary A. Meyer (W9RUJ) is the only woman operator in Waukesha county. She is shown at her set relaying a message to another station. This is known to hams as traffic handling. This is a vital phase in the radio amateur's contribution to our civil defense effort.



MOBILE SET — Bob Schoessow, W9GCF, Calhoun tunes up his mobile transmitter in his car.



ANTENNA — This is a typical rotary antenna.



OLD AND YOUNG — Bob Lathrop, 907 Racine and Lanny McLaughlin, 405 S. Hartwell talk shop.



ALL DAY JOB — Lowell Koepf (W9HIF and W9EZZ) keeps on the job all day long. He has a mobile unit in his car, another at home and operates still another in a Milwaukee filling station. His home is in Brookfield.